



punch

OR

THE LONDON CHARIVARI



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Charivaria

"WILL HITLER take Spain?" asks a headline. Surely not, when MUSSOLINI gave it to FRANCO as a present.

According to a German broadcaster Berlin editors can publish exactly what they like. Yes, just once.

Conjuring is the hobby of a Registrar of Marriages, and at one time it was his ambition to be a stage magician. However, he settled down to be a professional disillusionist.

We are reminded that there will be many conferences when the war is over. To decide what it *was* over.



A gossip-writer refers to a Staff Officer who drinks nothing but ginger-beer. Without disclosing any meteorological information we can go so far as to say that recently he became a full-blown General.

"Prince KONOYE finds himself at the parting of the ways," says a writer. "What will he do?" In pre-war days the usual procedure was to open a petrol-station.

A Chicago merchant has just been granted his fifth divorce. An Isolationist, evidently.



HITLER, according to a German now in America, has short legs but long arms. Nevertheless, many people think that he has over-reached himself this time.

"I forget about war when I play a rubber of bridge with friends," says a correspondent. This doesn't sound like bridge at all.

A newspaper writer recently saw Marshal GOERING, in mufti, raise his hat to a number of Paris women. Possibly, but are we sure it was his own hat?

A sculptor announces that he has finished a piece of statuary in a remote country district. People who have seen the completed work are agitating that it should be purchased by the nation and removed to a place of danger.

Bishops and Beer Corner

"REAL CHANCE.—Very sound hotel, Cathedral town; large lounge bar; steady profits for years."

Advt. in "The Times."

Optimism Corner

"WORLD AFFAIRS
PLEASE KEEP TIDY."

Notice over a book-case in Epsom College.

Instructions for performing a conjuring-trick begin: "Take three eggs and three lemons." That's the baffling part of the illusion.



A public-library attendant says that paragraphs from leading articles in one London journal are continually cut out. We should be inclined to think that the attraction is something on the other side of the paper.

The Hustler

(A fantastic impression almost entirely derived from the Popular Press)

"YES, but what did he do when he came to the office?" I wondered.

"He went through the place," they replied, "with a vacuum broom, Like a half-mad rhinoceros round our Departments he thundered.

He seemed a simoom.

"Red tape was curse of it all from the floor to the top of it, Festooned from the ceiling right down to the desks underneath,

Never once in the annals of England had been such a crop of it—

He tore the red tape with his teeth.

"We were mostly top-hafted, stripe-trousered, black-coated and vested,

And that is a thing that (he very soon told us) he loathes. He ripped off our suits—in Whitehall we were sometimes arrested

For walking about without clothes.

"He would notice a stack of new files upon old files lying, He trampled them down and he kicked them about with his feet.

Memoranda and minutes from windows were constantly flying

All over the street.

"Directors, Assistant Directors, each day he collected And fired them or told them that each was a dolt or a dunce.

He would take up two telephones frequently—both disconnected—

And use them at once.

"It took us some time to assess his unorthodox habits.

He thumped with his fist till the ink-pots leaped up in the air.

We fancied he never would stop—we were frightened as rabbits—

As he spun round and round in his chair.

"Can you ask why we privately called him Controller of Sacking?

And rejoiced at the wonderful drive that he always got on, Or felt as we *did* feel that something tremendous was lacking

When we knew he had gone?"

EVOE.

Give a Man a Pipe He Can Smoke.

I HEAR a great deal of fuss about a shortage of cigarettes. People are always taking these small tubes out of their mouths to tell me how difficult it is to get them at X— or at Y—, though they hear there are plenty at Z—. I sympathize, accept one with apologies and pass on. I accept not because I particularly want a cigarette, but

because it saves trouble to do so. At one time I used to try to refuse . . .

"No, I won't thanks."

"Go on."

"No, really, thanks, I've just—"

"Don't be an ass. Have one."

"It's very nice of you, but—"

"It's all right, I've got plenty at the moment. Go ahead."

"No, really, I've got a packet of my own somewhere. Have one of mine."

"Come on, take it."

"Well," I say, "thanks very much, if you're sure it's all right."

"Perfectly all right. I've got lots."

Now I just take them straight off. Life is too short and uncertain.

I am not a cigarette-smoker by choice. They seem to me to be things to go with small cups of coffee and intervals between dances. I belong to the great dumb company of pipe-smokers who suffer in silence a lot ten times more painful than any these shrill yapping cigarette-hounds have been called upon to endure.

Before the war I used to smoke —, a noble brand, or —, or the soothing —. These, as every pipe-smoker knows, are not exotic, exclusive or desperately expensive tobaccos; just ordinary decent Virginian flakes in round or rectangular 2-ounce tins. I don't smoke them now. I smoke —! and —!! and the lamentable —. And I am lucky to get even those.

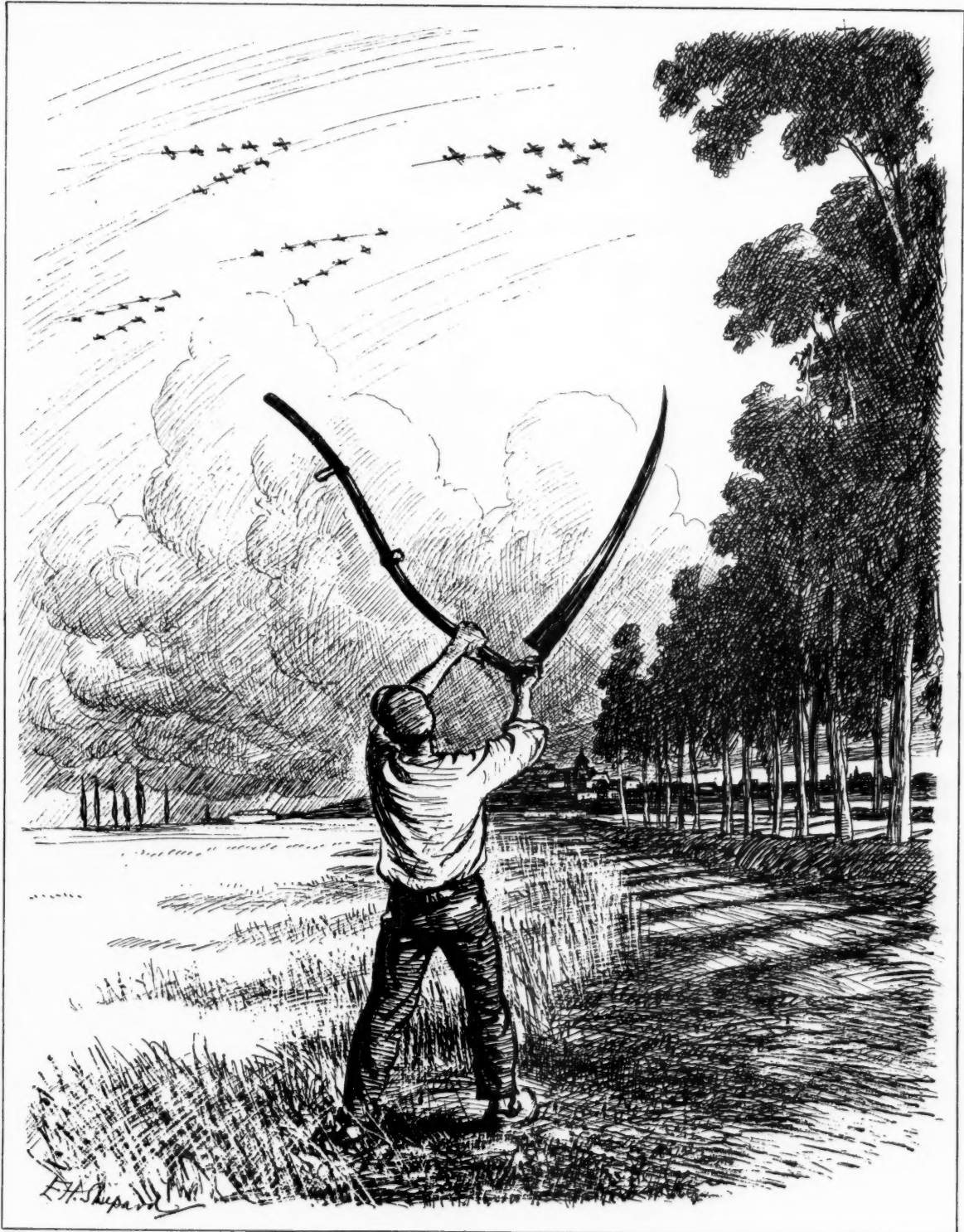
Have you tried —? It is put up in one-ounce paper packets which bust with a sharp crackling noise when you try to open them and deposit a shower of finely-chopped hay on the carpet. I have had a good deal of experience with this tobacco—the tobacco that is *different*—and here are my recommendations.

To Fill the Pipe. If you have found a way of transferring the tobacco from packet to pouch there is no difficulty. Simply insert the pipe into the pouch and draw it through the mixture with a quick scooping movement. If the bowl is not quite full at the first scoop, leave it at that and be thankful. If the bowl is practically empty it means either (a) there is no tobacco in the pouch or (b) you forgot to keep the stem of the pipe above the level of the bowl, with the result that the tobacco has all run out again through the mouthpiece. My own method is to keep this brand of tobacco in a jug and pour it into the pipe through a funnel.

To Light Up. Simply ignite, using a taper rather than a match, as the mixture is highly inflammable and may scorch the fingers if the hand is held too close. For the same reason it is better not to have the pipe in the mouth during this process.

To Smoke. When the first flare-up has died down put the pipe in the mouth. Don't breathe in, as this fills the back of the throat with small pieces of hay. On the other hand don't breathe out, or you'll set your clothing alight with a cascade of sparks. Just hold the pipe loosely between the teeth and let it smoulder. In this way you see the smoke and you get the aroma, which is Eastern without being mysterious.

So much for —. I don't want the makers to think I am against their tobacco, because as a matter of fact I quite like it—compared with —. You probably know —? Yes, I thought you would. It's that very dark stuff, going slightly grey on top, which has for some reason been soaked in black treacle, cut into narrow strips and then rolled upon by a heavy steam-roller. When I rub or tease this extraordinary material, preparatory to insertion in the pipe, I find it tends to stick in a tiresome way to my fingers



THE SIGN



"... and 'ere's me Identity Card, Lady."

and thumbs and has to be scraped off with a trowel or sharp-edged tool. I use a palette-knife myself. Another method is to roll it in flour, but this is clearly wasteful, and what is worse, the flour combines with the treacle to form a sort of pancake at the bottom of the pipe. Smear the inside of the bowl beforehand with margarine if you want the cake to turn out nicely.

This tobacco, unlike —, is not readily combustible, and has to be vigorously pulled at not only to get it alight but to keep it so. In this way one gets the full flavour, a big drawback. I have never been able to decide in my own mind just what the outstanding characteristics of this flavour are, but it certainly has individuality. Thus, when I am smoking —, or —, my friends often ask me, in a sympathetic spirit, whether I am smoking old socks; but when I am having a pipe of this — stuff, they ask me whether I would mind smoking old socks instead if they brought me some.

I do not suffer alone. There are thousands like me. All over the country we sit, the dauntless pipe-smokers of England, scrabbling up from the corners of our tattered pouches a last fill of —! or —!! or the execrable —.

All round us cigarette-smokers, smoking the very brand they smoked before the war, and smoking it, so it seems to us, in considerable quantities, fill the air with their lamentations and write long letters to the papers about their ill-treatment. But we make no complaint—or if we groan at all, groan only with the nausea that comes from —! or —!! or the inconceivable —. H. F. E.

Blunt Question

("Cosmetics may be difficult to obtain . . .")

WHEN cheeks are as Nature intended,
And vary from pallor to rose;
When powder's no longer expended
On dulling the sheen on the nose;

When all vanishing cream has vanished,
And the last lone lipstick's died,
Will beauty then be banished . . .
Or be intensified? A. W. B.

Edward Chip and Untruthful Ann

THERE was once a man named Edward Chip who was known as very straightforward because his speech was downright and his behaviour was upright. He had never had a days illness in his life but although he was not married he thought he would like to be which proves that where some fellows are concerned *Mens sana in corpore sano* is just a skyscraper in Spain.

But Edward wanted to marry a girl with brains and beauty too so naturally he remained a bachelor for some time because as you have probably noticed brainy girls often look it and beautiful girls often know only just enough to tell left from right and possibly right from wrong.

Well one day Edward took a train to London or rather the train took him and sitting opposite him in the carriage was a girl who was so good looking that she was actually as attractive as the average girl thinks she is.

Of course in the good old days if a strange man spoke to a young lady in a railway carriage she didn't even hear him but nowadays only bridge players seem to worry about conventions so when Edward said Er excuse me does this train stop at Waterloo? the good looking girl quite brazenly said Yes it does.

Now when a girl answers Yes to that question you can be certain she has a modern outlook because as everyone knows the traditional answer to Does this train stop at Waterloo? is Well there will be a nasty accident if it doesn't. So Edward opened the window and threw caution to the winds and said Well it is nasty weather for a Thursday isn't it? and the good looking girl said Dont talk to me about our climate so after that they naturally told each other just what they thought about it.

Well when a lady and a gentleman use language like that they can almost picture themselves sitting at a breakfast table so when the good looking girl said her name was Ann and that she thought Edward was ever so nice he knew that she had a discerning brain as well so before long he was asking permission to marry Ann. Anns father said Only too pleased and her mother said Ann is a sweet thing and her father said Well no she is just like her mother.

Well one morning after they had been married long enough for it to seem longer Edward said More coffee darling which of course is quite a long speech for a husband to make at breakfast time but all Ann said was Get it yourself. He said Who? so she said You. He said Me? so she said Yes. So he said Oh.

She said Must you sit there with that newspaper propped up in front of you? so he said Well I have to. She said What do you mean you have to? so he said Well there isn't room to lay it flat.

She said Do you love me? so he said Yes darling is there any more toast? She said Then you really are glad you married me? so he said Why change the subject darling isn't there a piece that isn't burnt?

She said Well listen Mr. and Mrs. Turvey are almost as semi detached as their house is but he has bought her a new summer dress so Edward said Where are my cigarettes? She said To think of a dress like that being wasted on Mrs. Turvey so Edward said Personally I think Mrs. Turvey is very attractive so Ann said Thats what I mean. She said Why dont you buy me a summer dress? so he said What with? She said But when we were courting you said you were well off so he said All bachelors are darling.

He said And who told Mr. Turvey that my income runs into four figures? so Ann said Perhaps Mrs. Turvey did you had better take your umbrella when you go dear. He

said To hell with my umbrella so she said I dont think you will need it there darling. He said But who told Mrs. Turvey? so she said I cant think. He said I am beginning to realize that but did you tell her? so she said Well what is wrong with saying your income runs into four figures? and he said Because it isn't a four figure income thats why. She said Is the Thames the same as the North Sea? so he said Dont be silly. She said But it runs into it doesnt it? so he said Well yes so she said Well then.

Edward said But werent you taught to speak the truth when you were at school? so Ann said Yes the trouble with our educational system is that it doesnt fit people to take their place in society. Edward said Dont you know what happens to people who pretend they are better off than they really are? so Ann said Yes they get asked out ever such a lot and everyone says What charming people.

Edward said Well I forbid you to tell falsehoods so Ann said Oh you forbid me do you? He said Yes if there is anyone round here giving orders its me so Ann said And if there is anyone round here taking no notice of them its me.

She said How would you like it if I started telling the truth about you eh? so Edward said Well then of course people really would think you were boasting.

You will have to guess what they said to each other immediately after that because in the interests of safety we have drawn an asbestos veil over it but when at last their voices had quietened down so much that the people five doors away could scarcely hear what they were saying Edward said Well I will forgive you this time but you must promise me always to speak the truth in future. So Ann said If you insist darling but your Aunt Verina is coming to tea today and I do hope she wont mind when I tell her that we keep her wedding present in the attic so Edward said Well of course you must be sort of tactful. Ann said Can you tell me a tactful way of saying that we keep it in the attic because the dustman refused to take it away? She said Well can you? She said Well say something for goodness sake. So he said something but it was hardly for goodness sake.

He said And that doesnt explain why you keep on boasting to Mrs. Turvey so Ann said Well Mr. Turvey has given Mrs. Turvey a summer dress and if you gave me one I wouldnt feel so inferior so Edward said But you dont deserve it because you pretend we have a thousand a year.

So Ann said Well darling if you work very hard and really do earn a thousand a year I shant have to pretend you do you see it is very simple to cure me isn't it? so Edward said Well I suppose it is the only way.

So Ann got her new summer dress and Edward worked very hard indeed and in time his income really was a thousand a year so he said Well darling now you neednt lie to Mrs. Turvey any more so Ann said Oh I hardly ever see her now you know they cant really keep up with us but the Foibles have asked us round on Sunday. So Edward and Ann got to know the Foibles very well and Mrs. Foible told all her friends what charming people the Chips were and when they said Are they? she said Oh yes my dear why from odd remarks Ann has made I am certain her husband makes at least fifteen hundred a year. Which only goes to prove the truth of the old saying Dogs can talk Pigs can fly And women never tell a lie.

But of course there are exceptions. For instance Mrs. Turvey is telling one hundred per cent of the truth when she says that ever since they were married Mr. Turvey hasnt bought her even a new summer dress. Ah well.

At the Pictures

MISCELLANY

In a fortnight unseasonably crowded with interesting new films, *Pimpernel Smith* (Director: LESLIE HOWARD) still stands out as the brightest British effort for some time. Here we have Mr. HOWARD in a typical LESLIE HOWARD part—he is miscellaneously responsible for this work—defeating the Gestapo just before the present war; the situation, as you probably know very well, is the *Scarlet Pimpernel* situation brought up to date. The off-hand Englishman, posing at home as an unworldly absent-minded professor, spends his holidays rescuing intellectuals from German concentration camps. I don't say that the piece is full of verisimilitude: the Gestapo as presented here isn't very bright (well, perhaps that's true) and it has uncommonly bad luck; but the story is exciting, amusing and well done, it has stimulating implications, and it is decorated with a number of rich and satisfying portraits of which the most highly-coloured is FRANCIS L. SULLIVAN's plump and venomous *General von Graum*. As the heroine MARY MORRIS, whose vitality has hitherto glittered only in small parts, strikingly makes the most of her first big chance.

Artificial in a different convention is the story of the new DIETRICH film, *The Flame of New Orleans* (Director: RENÉ CLAIR)—I am reminded for some reason of the sort of little book that was being published in the mid-nineteen-twenties, finely printed, with mock-archaic woodcut illustrations—and M. CLAIR gives it all the playfulness he has; but that suits it. The whole thing is exceedingly light and mannered, untouched by emotion, not to be taken seriously at all. And, indeed, if it had been done "straight," as if to be believed, the hackneyed outlines of the plot might have been too much to bear.

As it is, though, this trifle comes out as quite a pleasant entertainment. The characters are types—The Gay

Lady, The Banker, The Sailor, The Footman, The Maid—the period a century ago, the story one of the innumerable variations on the theme of *Harlequin*, *Columbine* and *Pantaloon* (in this instance respectively BRUCE CABOT, MISS DIETRICH and ROLAND YOUNG). Subsidiary parts have been found for MISCHA AUER and FRANKLIN PANGBORN—and also for ANDY DEVINE and FRANK JENKS, whose broad earthy grins might have been expected to crack the walls of such a meringue.

Advertised as if it were another crazy romantic comedy, *Penny Serenade* (Director: GEORGE STEVENS)

mind a remark made by *Applejack* (EDGAR BUCHANAN): "I always figure a person can't have too many handkerchiefs."

Easily the best of the others, and better in many ways than the three mentioned above, is *The Devil and Miss Jones* (Director: SAM WOOD). This is a story such as FRANK CAPRA loves, directed by Mr. WOOD with perhaps rather less deliberate "warmth" than Mr. CAPRA would give it, and none the worse, in my view, for that. The richest man in the world (CHARLES COBURN—it's a relief to find him for once not somebody's disapproving father) takes a job in one of the department stores he owns, to discover why the employees should be so discontented. He gets in with a very nice set (JEAN ARTHUR, SPRING BYINGTON), and it all turns out beautifully, as you don't have to be told. Seldom has a film department store had a nastier staff-manager than Mr. Hooper (EDMUND GWENN) or seen him more signally discomfited; seldom has a film rich man been more amenable to the kindness of the poor. (Here, as always in pictures, it's the poor what 'elps the rich.)

Interesting but with less popular appeal is the latest sign of ROBERT MONTGOMERY's determination to be taken seriously as an actor, *Rage in Heaven* (Director: W. S. VAN DYKE).

Here he is a paranoiac who stages his own murder in pursuit of a complicated and motiveless revenge on his best friend (GEORGE SANDERS) and his wife (INGRID BERGMAN), but all comes right with the help of an explosive mental specialist (OSCAR HOMOLKA). It's a sound thriller; I found it absorbing. Finally I want to say a good word for *Once a Crook* (Director: HERBERT MASON), the best-directed, most entertaining British crook comedy I've seen for a long time. This is exactly the sort of thing some British directors are fondest of doing worst. It has two stars, GORDON HARKER and SYDNEY HOWARD, but they are by no means solely responsible for its unpretentious merit.

R. M.



(The Flame of New Orleans)

BRIDAL INNOCENCE

Claire Ledez MARLENE DIETRICH
Auntie LAURA HOPE CREWS

proves to be a different kind of box-office socko, the "tear-jerker." To be sure there are romantic moments, and comic moments; but the theme of the piece is parental love and frustration. It is all about a childless young couple who adopt a baby, lavish affection on it, lose it and, after a period of being broken up by this, adopt another. That essentially is the whole story; what makes it last nearly two hours is the leisureliness and the detail with which it is told, and the fact that it has to cover the life of a child, which is all detail. IRENE DUNNE and CARY GRANT are the principals, helped by an assortment (one at a time) of small children, and the whole thing is very efficiently and competently done. People easily moved should bear in

Music in London

The Ghost Goes S.W.7.

LONDON has a large population of ghosts. Among the most famous were the frolicsome sprites inhabiting the dome of the Albert Hall, that gathered up sounds of speech and music and tossed them back and forth to each other so that the concert-goer heard nothing but a silvery distant babel; or else pelted him with noises from all directions so that he heard six, ten, twenty concerts at once instead of just the one he had paid for. These have been exorcized by a false ceiling that looks like an enormous sea-anemone, but on our first visit to the Promenade Concerts we found that a newcomer had taken their place—a jovial phantom this, wearing clogs, and apparently a relation of our old friend the Ghost in Goloshes that used to squelch its dismal way through the wireless programmes. This Spirit in Sabots enjoys himself hugely in piano concertos and pizzicato passages for strings (such as the Scherzo of the Fourth Symphony of TSCHAIKOWSKY) and goes clattering round the empty gallery in a rollicking *Schuhplattler*. He also has a friend who enjoys playing third trombone and, on occasion, fourth or fifth trumpet.

In spite of these hauntings, however, the Promenade Concerts have lost not one whit of their popularity through their enforced migration from Queen's Hall. Sir HENRY WOOD (assisted this season by Mr. BASIL CAMERON) holds a unique place in the affection of Promenade audiences, and the concerts are as crowded as ever. The organizers have done their best to reproduce the atmosphere of Queen's Hall (there is a nostalgic acting-fountain of ferns in the arena) and the programmes, which are of prodigious length, follow traditional lines—WAGNER on Mondays, BACH or BRAHMS on Wednesdays, and Friday night is BEETHOVEN night. The orchestra is again the London Symphony, and of the soloists, we heard on succeeding nights Mr. MOISEWITSCH give a brilliant performance of TSCHAIKOWSKY's little-known *Pianoforte Concerto in G*, and Mr. CLIFFORD CURZON (whose pianissimo tone is a delight to hear) in BEETHOVEN's *Emperor*. Miss EVA TURNER *Softly Sighed* from *Der Freischütz*—luckily not too softly, nor alas! too well in tune—in a programme which also contained BEETHOVEN's *Eighth Symphony* and a HANDEL Organ Concerto.

We are glad that there is no sugges-



Forgnose

"... and this is a thing for getting stones out of armoured vehicles' tracks."

tion this year, as there was last, that this is to be Sir HENRY WOOD's last season. In any case, it bids fair to be among his most successful.

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I Schpy!

Herr Nasenparke lectures Fifth Columnists on "Rumour-Mongerismus."

THE first thing is to be a tell-the tale of all sorts. Give tongue to falsetto information of a disturbing kind, for the people's eers, and do not be backward in murmuring the rong thing, that it may be widespread.

For instance, be the first to whisber that Winsdon Chorchill is timid, at nights, with alarm, or that Lord Beaverbruk quavers many times, thinking of the *Luftwaffe*, ha! ha! Deride the government with suggestive chat and describe faskoes and rough-and-tumbles at Kabinet meetings as if it had been you who had himself been there. Mock the Commons house with quips and contemptible gesticulates. Remarque that the Speakerman in

Parliament is hands in gloves with you-know-who.

Spin terrible yarns hour by hour. Assert, by example, that the Island of Wights has been sunk by the Fuehrer's artillerers, the clever fellows, and his low-dive bombastiks. Even should this maybe not perhaps be believed you, some alarming fable will escape and place credulous persons in jeopardy of disgomfiture, by means of having at one time or another been hanging on your lips. Give the impression that you are he who knows a thing or two, sideways, and pretty grim at that, eh? for diskuraging hopefulness and go.

If in Schotland, search for Jakobitismus, and allow the notion to get about the place that he who is to come over the water is the King, the bonny prince, and so say we all, God bless him, do you hear? While in Wales, if at all, support Keltic vigour and mention the Tudors while discussing the Fuehrer-Prinzip. Suggest that battle might be done against the Englisch, o! what oppressors!

Study what I have said and I will tell you further. Dis-schmiss.

The Typewriter

ON the whole, considering everything, surprisingly little is known about the typewriter. I don't of course mean any special typewriter, because every typewriter is known all about by someone; but the typewriter in general. Statisticians have got together a few facts: that typewriters are either *portable*, that is, very difficult to carry, or *non-portable*, that is, very difficult to lift; and that, as modern life gets more and more modern, a greater number of people will type with a greater number of fingers; and finally, that cake-crumbs in the works of a typewriter don't mean that anyone has been eating cake, but are what science calls *spontaneously generated*, like cake-crumbs in pockets.

There is another and, I think, a better way of telling portable typewriters from non-portable, and that is by sorting out the people who work them. People who type on non-portable typewriters are nearly always *paid*, and this means that they use all the fingers of each hand, and one of their thumbs, and before they can get at their typewriter they have to untangle a black mackintosh cover from the handle at the side of the machine. Every now and then these people are swept by a wave of respect for their typewriters; they have a funny feeling that it is the typewriter which pays them to type on it. Almost all they can do to express this respect is to tip the typewriter off its felt mat, shake the rubber crumbs from the mat on to the floor, and put the typewriter back so that all its feet are on the mat now, instead of only three. But people with portable typewriters are swept by quite different feelings: pride, for about a month after they have bought the typewriter, a kind of smugness if anyone watches for a minute or two while they are actually typing, and a kind of boiling irritation if anyone watches for longer than a minute or two—the point about people with portable typewriters being that they automatically have very artistic temperaments.

Well, now to go back to the typewriters themselves. Every typewriter has roughly the same basic lay-out. There are about forty-two keys, if you remember not to count the back-spacer, but there is a general feeling among people who type, especially on portable typewriters, that they could get along with only thirty-seven, as no fewer than four keys are given over to fractions—which no one takes any notice of after the first few days—and, away on the other side of the keyboard, either the a or the z is quite unnecessary as it is always hit in mistake for either the z or the a. There is a rule, by the way, that the letters on a typewriter keyboard are arranged not in the order of the alphabet but in the order letters always are arranged on a typewriter keyboard and, though this rule has puzzled many people, there is a very good reason for it: it standardizes typing. For example, any person to whom any other person types a word like *rgv* has only to look at a typewriter keyboard to realize that this other person was really typing *the*, but had the bad luck to be a little too far to the left of the keyboard.

I ought to say something about typewriter ribbons, because they are very interesting. Most people can put a new ribbon into a typewriter, or take an old one out, but no one has ever been able to take a new ribbon out or put an old one in. People who try find themselves up against some natural law which they never knew about before. For the first few seconds they can deceive themselves that it is going to be all right, and that when a ribbon gets unwound all they have to do is wind it up again; but there

comes a stage—something like swimming among reeds—when it is fatal to struggle. All they can do is keep calm and hope the ribbon will drop off them and they will be able to clean themselves up afterwards. Even when a ribbon is on a typewriter, by the way, it is interesting, because it gets fainter and fainter the more it is typed on, but keeps a dark patch or two in reserve just to give the person using it a dim hope that it isn't time to get a new one after all.

I don't think you need know any more about the actual working of a typewriter, except that there are a lot of little handles and levers, most of which have some effect on something, but always a different effect on different typewriters. This is another natural law, and its purpose is to prevent people from using other people's typewriters, even when they have been told they may. Now I want to tell you about how typewriters go wrong, and this brings me to yet another natural law, which is that non-portable typewriters—in other words, typewriters belonging to people other than the people typing on them—never go wrong, while portable typewriters do, nearly all the time. For instance, a portable typewriter is always stopping dead in the middle of a line. This may mean that the person typing can't think what to type next, but more often that what typewriter-shops call the carriage of the machine—that is, the part that moves along—has hit up against a pile of books. It is very difficult to put this right, or even to find out what has happened, the instinct of owners of portable typewriters being to take them to pieces at the smallest excuse—never to move the books. Again, portable typewriters are very prone to having lighted cigarettes dropped down between the keys, simply because it is almost impossible to get anything out of a portable typewriter without unscrewing it from its little platform and finding, besides the cigarette and the cake-crumbs I was telling you about, a lot of pale-grey fluff which it is impossible to get rid of without unscrewing the only other screws which can be reached with a screwdriver. These screws keep down the top of the typewriter round the little hammers which jump about when the keys are struck, and, although taking the top off a portable typewriter makes it no easier for the owners to get at any pale-grey fluff, it does make it easier for them to see exactly how the hammers jump about and to notice how each hammer is clogged up with shreds of india-rubber, and to get dreadfully depressed about the whole thing.

Finally, a few more words about the people who use typewriters. People who have never used a typewriter before type their names—first in small letters and then with a capital or two in the middle of a word—their addresses, and a little note to someone else in the room, and are quite excited whenever the bell rings at the end of a line. People who have typed once or twice before use the capital I for an l, and wonder why it comes out as i. The next important stage is finding out that if they type an m over and over again they have one of those low wire fences you see round park flower-beds, that asterisks will do for daisies, and that a row of per cent. signs looks as if it ought to look like something, but doesn't. After that typing is fairly straightforward, except when it comes to carbon paper. Carbon paper is used to make two copies of anything, one copy on the front of a page and one, inside out, on the back; this is known as efficiency. Indeed, the whole point of the typewriter is that it is efficient; I mean, that *anything typed on a typewriter looks exactly as if it has been typed*.



"Er—the ABLATIVE of bellum, Sir?"

Red Bread

I NEVER, never liked brown bread,
 Whatever aunts and uncles said.
 In vain they tried to make me see
 This beastly food was good for me.
 Though full of nourishment (said Nurse)
 It looked like mud, and tasted worse;
 And I would seldom care a lot
 If things were good for me, or not.
 (Yes, even at that early age
 Foul Self-indulgence took the stage
 And I would tend to sulk, or strike,
 If barred from what I chanced to like.)
 At all events, I laid it down
 The bread I ate should *not* be brown.

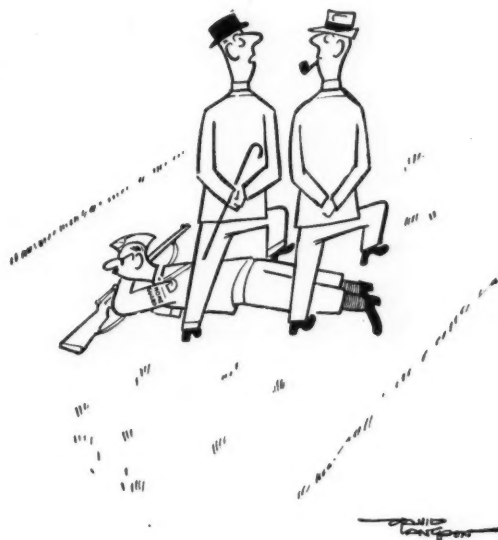
Years passed: and other people sought
 To make me eat as Britons ought.
 "Brown bread" was pressed on me no more;
 The "whole-meal loaf" became the bore.
 And though I liked the novel name
 The stuff, I thought, was much the same.
 Men saw me pleasantly engrossed
 In bread-and-cheese or buttered toast,
 And wondered how a man could eat
 "De-naturized" anæmic wheat.
 They said, for all the goodness there
 One might as well consume a chair,
 Fry bits of blotting-pad, or hat,
 Or spread one's butter on the mat.
 I answered "Nature was not meant
 To be a one-stringed instrument.
 She plays for each a different tune,
E.g." (I said) "observe the moon
 And how the tide is high elsewhere
 When it's Low Water over there."

I said that since the age of two
 White bread had been the bread I knew,
 And that, as far as I could see,
 Was what was "natural" for me.
 At all events, I laid it down,
 That bread I ate should *not* be brown.

But now, through Hitler and his works,
 We find ourselves in other circo.
 The Government, I understand,
 Of our superb but sea-girt land
 Are starting, just to win the war,
 This prehistoric hare once more
 And they desire us all to eat
 This unattractive whole-meal wheat.
 Well, more than anything, I love
 To do the will of H.M. Gov.
 I don't like Communists much more
 Than, right or wrong, I did before.
 But as I now salute the Red
 So will I bow to dear brown bread
 Because, as my wise rulers say,
 We shall save tonnage in this way
 (They say that half a million tons
 Will thus be wrested from the Huns).
 But let this point be understood—
 No man must tell me it is good:
 Nor shall I jump with girlish glee
 If someone screams it's good for me.
 My principles shall not be shed:
 I say, *I do not like brown bread!*
 I will attempt this awful thing
 To save the sailors of the King;
 I contemplate some loss of face
 That we may have more cargo-space.
 And you, I'm sure, for very shame
 Will ultimately do the same.

But when we've put the Prussian down,
 The bread I eat will *not* be brown.

A. P. H.





Parochialism

THE Panzers threaten Tarnopol and Novograd Volynsk, Polotsk and Borkovichi and the townships east of Minsk; They strive to span the Dniester; they are thrusting out for Kieff, And every waking hour is charged with hope and disbelief. But though the Huns hold Parnu, and they may have taken Pskov, They're still some way from Lewstock, which is what I'm thinking of.

We do not lack proportion when we watch the war take shape From Cronstadt to Constanza, from Aleppo to North Cape. But instinct is parochial; it is difficult to see That Ostrov means to someone else what Lewstock means to me.

I hope they hold Podolski, and Opochka will not go, Because thereby may Lewstock be delivered from the foe.

They've crossed the Beresina, where the stream is choked with dead; They fought to force the Dnieper, till the very waters bled. May flood bring down confusion on the heart of their design And fire destroy their columns that assail the Stalin line. Run high, you Russian rivers, that no mischief may pass through To overrun the Moskva—and afflict us by the Lew.

Our outlook should be broader, but, admitting this is so, It all comes back to villages and rivers that we know; And, but for grey hulls heaving and for wings of waxing power, The Panzers would be passing over Lewstock at this hour.

So runs the soul's reflection, as I scan the map afresh For Orsha, Dno, Mohilev, Sokolinki and Sebesk.



GOOD HUNTING!

"What does it matter how we're dressed on an expedition like this?"

"THEY ALSO SERVE"

THEY are brave, these people who, behind the scenes, whether at home or in the factories, go quietly about their essential tasks. Air-raids, nights in shelters, lost sleep, nerve strain, all is accepted cheerfully, for they are determined to carry on. Even when they are bombed and lose their homes and cherished possessions, their grateful appreciation of the help given them through the PUNCH HOSPITAL COMFORTS FUND acclaims the spirit which cannot be broken.

The privilege of service to them is extended to you. Will you help us supply their most urgent needs? If you have helped us with contributions before will you please help us again? If this is your first introduction to the Fund will you please become a subscriber? Donations will be gratefully acknowledged by Mr. Punch at PUNCH HOSPITAL COMFORTS FUND, 10 Bouverie Street, London, E.C.4.



"Or-right, I'M comin'—'ave it yer own way!"

Impressions of Parliament

Business Done

Tuesday, July 15th.—House of Lords: Noble Lords are Fed Up about Food.

House of Commons: A Statement on the War—and the House Asserts Itself.

Wednesday, July 16th.—House of Commons: A Little of Many Bills.

Thursday, July 17th.—House of Commons: Secret Session on Home Defence.

Tuesday, July 15th.—The House of Commons has clearly never been easy about the application to itself of the homeopathic theory in Britain's fight against Dictatorship.

Members, recognizing that considerable inroads have of necessity to be made into our traditional liberties in time of war, have borne with patience constant demands for secret sessions and invocations of the information-denying formula "not-in-the-public-interest." But they have all the time been watchful of the age-long freedom of their honourable House, and to-day all the pent-up independence came out with a rush.

It was an inspiring, a refreshing, a thrilling sight. Before it, even the eloquence and personal prestige of Mr. WINSTON CHURCHILL were unavailing. He rose up after the Question-hour and read the House a severely-worded lecture on its too-outspokenness in the previous week's two-day debate on war production. Allegations of chaos at the Ministry of Aircraft Production, and a general suggestion that we were not all-out in our war effort had done harm abroad. They were not true, anyway. Members should be more careful of their statements, he added, looking over his glasses in reproof.

So there would be yet another day's debate on production—apparently for the main purpose of enabling Mr. CHURCHILL to make a speech putting in their right perspective the charges and allegations made in the previous discussion—which he had not been able to attend.

Not greatly relishing the dominion-like tone of the announcement, Members sat silent for a few seconds, then sent over a sharp fusillade of questions. Mr. JACK LAWSON, from

the Front Opposition Bench, complained that some of the misunderstanding was due to "too frequent evasion" by Ministers of legitimate questions put by M.P.s. There was a roar of cheers.

Mr. CHURCHILL, always swift to scent an adverse Parliamentary "situation," was at once conciliatory, and promised that there should be ample time for answers by Back-Benchers to the Ministerial answers to Back-Benchers.

Pleased with their demonstration of the indiscernibility of Parliamentary freedom, and their reminder to the Executive that Parliament is still master, Members let it go at that.



LOOKING-GLASS SHOPPING

Alice (Lord Addison). "I should like to buy an egg, please."

The Sheep (Lord Woolton). "I never put things into people's hands—that would never do—you must get it for yourself."

Mr. CHURCHILL announced that Britain had signed with Soviet Russia an agreement for mutual aid and no separate peace. This made Russia our ally—(Labour cheers, and cries to the Conservatives of "Cheer, cheer!")—but it did not mean that we were fighting the battle for Communism—(Conservative cheers, and cries to the Labour benches of "Cheer, cheer!").

The war in Syria was over, with the Allies victorious. Some day the full story would be told of how the Horse Guards, the Life Guards and the Essex Yeomanry had dashed across deserts to capture an oasis, and how the whole sad incident had been brought to a merciful end speedily and satisfactorily.

In the Lords, Lord DAWSON OF PENN

was once more on the milk-wagon, urging that the Government should provide milk and eggs in plenty for all, as part of the munitions of war. The cow returned better value for food given than any other animal: for every 100 pounds of protein food, she gave 35 lb. of food value. Her nearest competitor, was that other lady, the hen, with 31 lb. for 100. Then the pig—lady or gent—with 26, and the bullock—this with a withering glance at pro-beef Lord TEVIOT, sitting opposite—a piffling 7 to 9 lb.

Lord TEVIOT winced at the blasphemy, but Lord DAWSON ignored the symptoms and went on with his diagnosis of Britain's troubles: too few eggs, too little milk, too little Governmental imagination and foresight, too many forms to be filled in. The result of the war would depend on the bodies and spirits of the ordinary man and woman. Milk would feed both body and spirit.

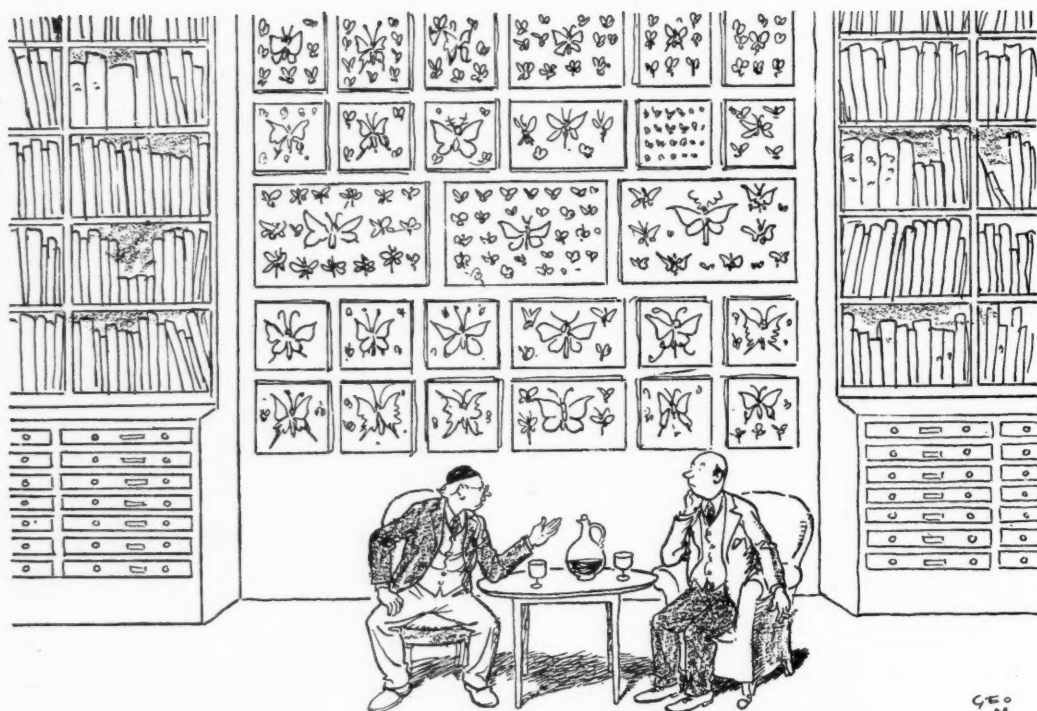
The Duke of NORFOLK, for the Ministry of Agriculture, promised that the principle of "Ladies first" should apply when food had to be given to cows or bullocks, but he hoped there would be no greater demand for milk—a "direct negative" to Lord DAWSON's wishes that made the House gasp by its directness—and its negativity.

But the noble Duke was enjoying himself, and he added (apparently to show that he could be cautious as well as audacious) that "Considering, supplies are not too unsatisfactory."

And then—with just the shade of a smile that made your scribe wonder how much of the speech had been a drily-delivered leg-pull—the Duke solemnly appealed to his fellow-Peers, sitting with dignity on their scarlet benches, to catch eels in the rivers, streams, ponds and puddles. Good food, eels, with a drop o' vinegar and that! he seemed to say.

Peers looked pained. Then puzzled. Then amused. Then they cheered. The young Duke had pulled their legs as neatly as any Old Parliamentary Hand could have done it. Or was he serious? From his face, it was impossible to tell.

Lord DAVIES has scented something fishy about the fish trade, and formally "moved for papers." As there ain't going to be no fish, there was no need for paper, so the noble Lord withdrew the demand.



"When I was a boy I ran away from school and joined a troupe of strolling lepidopterists."

Food Minister Lord WOOLTON promised concentrated foods—including milk—from the U.S.A. soon, and explained that the mysterious yellow ration books are partly to ensure good distribution of these foods.

Wednesday, July 16th.—Mr. DUFF COOPER, Minister of Information, devised an improvement on the "non-committal" Ministerial reply. Questioned by Major MILNER, he startled the House by answering: "Yes, Sir—No, Sir!"

The Major evidently had some difficulty in restraining himself from reciting the nursery rhyme: "Bah! Bah! Black Sheep!"

Mr. DUFF COOPER also announced this ingenious solution of the Soviet National Anthem crisis: *All National Anthems* are to be cut out of the B.B.C. programmes, and be replaced by a selection of national songs—one nation at a time.

Mr. ROBERT MORRISON, Postmaster-General, promised better mail facilities for war prisoners, and Mr. RICHARD LAW undertook to see what could be done to aid soldiers who wanted to marry by proxy—a step which he said

drily had not been very urgently demanded by the troops.

Mr. A. V. ALEXANDER, First Lord of the Admiralty, caused a flutter by appearing on the Treasury Bench. Most had forgotten that he is still a Member of the House, so rare are his attendances. His mission to-day was to assure all concerned that there

was no need for any changes in the status of the W.R.N.S.

Thursday, July 17th.—This time quite definitely with ashamed looks, the Commons went once more into secret session. Their topic was home defence, in which, as one anti-secrecy critic put it, the general public might be assumed to have some small interest and part.

However, the doors slammed, the curtains were drawn, and all is silence.

There were three types of repair: the first was done by the squadron; the second was done where the machine was wrecked by a civil gang of experts; and the third was done by taking the machine back to the works."—*Parliamentary Report*.

Without letting the gang near it—civil or not.

"The lucky ones are those reasonably near a waterpoint. Those farther away must restrict their consumption to a gallon a day. Yet, given the right spirit, the men bear such privations without apparently suffering."—*Daily Telegraph*.

Quite.



OUR BACK BENCH WHO'S WHO

MAJOR MILNER

As Others Hear Us Now

"MIMI says she's going to use all hers for stockings."

"Darling, she can't. It's definitely unpatriotic. Everybody says it is. Either we must go about darned, or in bare legs."

"Well, Mimi says she won't do either. She's going to have these masses and masses of silk stockings, and absolutely nothing else."

"I heard of a woman who bought quantities of chamois-leather squares, unrationed, and is going to make herself a sports coat."

"How marvellous! I wonder if one could do anything with dish-cloths?"

"Darling, I don't think so. I mean, you wouldn't like to have *Pantry Pantry Pantry* in red all round your skirt, would you, or just *Kitchen* for a belt?"

"Well, what about those awful floor-cloths? I do think one might be able to stitch them together in some way."

"If you mean the ones that are made

out of string mesh, I don't really think it's a frightfully good idea."

"I see what you mean."

"Mimi says, Go all out on summer things and leave the winter to take care of itself."

"She must be off her head. Judy says, What does it matter about the summer? Wear anything or nothing, and save all your coupons for things like tailor-mades and a warm coat."

"And of course one has to remember boots and shoes."

"And black-out material. Or isn't it rationed? Or is it?"

"Darling, I think it must be. Because otherwise think of the yards of black velvet or crêpe-de-chine one could buy, and just have made up."

"I know a woman who knows a woman who tried to buy butter muslin without coupons because she said it was to make bags for the figs, but they wouldn't let her."

"Quite right too. One could make

the most lovely tennis-frock out of butter-muslin."

"Well, darling, I'm not perfectly certain one could—but perhaps that's because I'm no good at needlework."

"If one *is*, one can make almost anything into anything, I suppose. Mimi had one idea that she told me about, only it's absolutely private."

"Do tell me."

"Well, you may think it *sounds* rather dishonest, of course."

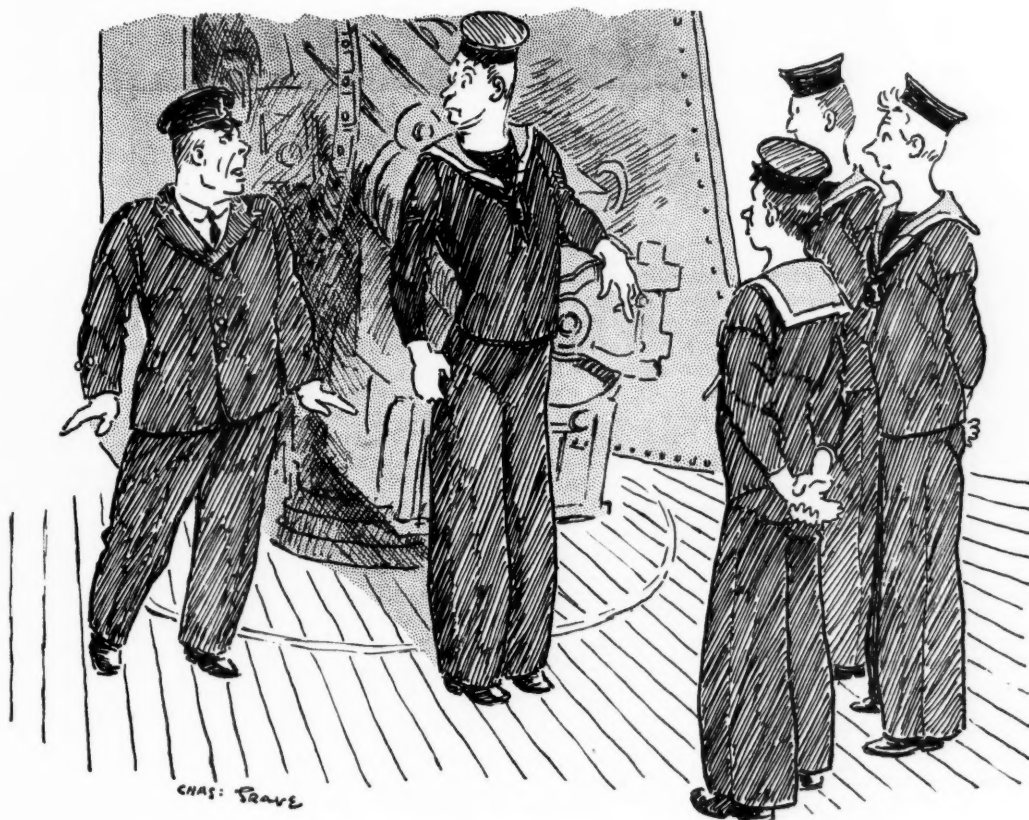
"I expect I shall, knowing Mimi, but I won't give her away."

"She thought she'd buy a lot of white surplises, as if she meant to clothe a whole lot of little choir-boys. Church Vestments aren't rationed."

"Do you mean one doesn't need any margarine for them?"

"Not an ounce, Mimi says."

"Darling, how *too* marvellous! Just think of what one could do with some of those perfectly lovely coloured Oxford hoods! . . ." E. M. D.



"For the love of Mike, tell 'em in plain language, and cut out all that Navy Week stuff."



"Caro mio, with hair like yours it is easy to appear calm!"

Interview

I SHALL not be afraid of the Board," I had told Sapper Sympson on the previous evening, "because it is of little importance to me whether I become an officer or not. The Colonel seemed keen on the idea, so I felt it was my duty to go forward, but personally I should be quite glad to remain a sapper. I shall be quite frank with the Board, and tell them exactly what I think of the Army."

Sympson laughed derisively.

"I'll bet," he said, "that when you are actually face to face with them you will behave like a stuffed dummy."

As I sat in the train on the way to Castledover, where the Command Board sits, I pondered Sympson's words and determined that they should prove false.

As I marched boldly down Castledover High Street I thought out precisely what I would say. I would tell them that my only object in taking a commission was to help them. This would put them in their place at once. I would then point out exactly what

was wrong with the Army, and give a rough outline of my plans for putting everything right.

I entered the building where the interview was to take place, and a sergeant who was lurking in the doorway told me to put my cap on properly.

"It is on perfectly properly," I told him. "This is the angle at which we wear it in the R.E.s. In infantry regiments I am aware that they have peculiar ideas about the angle at which caps, F.S., are worn, but in the R.E.s—"

He was a man of no breeding whatever, and interrupted me.

"You have it on," he said, "back to front; and if I have any more of your lip I shall report you."

I hastily adjusted it and swept past him with all the dignity I could muster. I was ushered into a room full of men. Some were privates, some were corporals, some were sappers, some were gunners; there were even two sergeants—but all were after commissions.

We talked. A sergeant said that so far as he was concerned he did not care whether or not he obtained a commission. He had only gone forward, he explained, because his C.O. seemed keen on the idea.

A corporal said that this was his own case exactly. He gave the impression that the C.O. had practically gone down on his knees to him to persuade him to offer himself as a candidate. We agreed that much the same had happened to all of us.

"And I shall tell the Board," concluded the corporal, "a few home truths. In fact the prospect of doing so is what has really lured me here."

His name was called at that moment, and ten minutes later he came out looking rather dazed.

"Did you tell them a few home truths?" I asked.

He did not seem to hear me. Instead, he asked us all what was the formula for blowing abutments of bridges. I happened to have it written down in my diary, and when I told him

he just groaned heavily and rushed away, asking as he went what time the pubs opened in this something something town.

We all committed to memory the formulæ for blowing abutments, but were rather dashed when the next candidate came back and said that the Board had merely discussed with him the trend of modern poetry and the probable attitude of the nation to conscription after the war.

We pooled our information about modern poetry. We decided that after the war conscription would be generally welcomed. Then the next candidate threw us into confusion again by coming out with the face-piece of his respirator dangling down.

"They just asked me," he said bitterly, "to give a demonstration of how I would show my section the way to carry out personal decontamination, and then, without the slightest warning, one of them rattled a rattle and I had to put on my respirator."

We all took out our respirators and anti-dimmed them. Then my own name was called, and next moment I found myself facing the Board.

I told myself that I had no reason to be afraid of them. I remembered that I had promised Sympton to tell them what I thought of the Army.

The Board consisted of three men. The middle one looked mild and genial, the others looked fierce. The middle one asked questions, the others took notes.

"Sit down," said the middle one, "and take off your cap. No, you need not put your leg through the strap of your respirator."

He asked me what I thought of General de Gaulle. I said he was a fine chap. He asked me what I thought of Winston Churchill. I said he was a fine chap.

"And how," he said, "do you like the men you are soldiering with?"

I said they were fine chaps.

He seemed to think, for some reason that I could not fathom, that I was nervous, and asked me, in the tone of an indulgent grandfather, why I wanted to be an officer.

I replied that there were various reasons. He asked what they were. Absurdly enough I could only think of one, that it would be nice to have a

batman to press my trousers, and this I felt would not be well received.

He asked if I thought I could control men, and I was about to answer with easy confidence when I noticed that one of my bootlaces was undone. I gazed at it as if mesmerized. He followed my gaze. The two fierce-looking members of the Board did likewise. One of them immediately made a note of it. I half expected the other to take out a camera and photograph it.

There was rather a long silence. Nobody seemed able to take their eyes off the offending lace.

The man in the middle chuckled. "Mine always used to do that," he said. "Well, Sapper Conkleshill, I do not think we need waste any more of your time. You will be posted to an O.C.T.U. in the near future."

As I passed through the ante-chamber a sergeant asked me if I had told the Board what I thought of the Army.

"Yes," I said. "I told them I thought it was the best Army in the world. What time did you say the pubs opened in this delightful town?"



"... I've just met the sweetest young subaltern—and your car's had a collision with a tank."



"I left a device for destroying the night-bomber just there a day or so ago, and now the blessed thing's been swept away or something. Ah, well . . ."

Our Booking-Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

Adventure Street

FLEET Street in the period which closed with the First Great War was still in essentials much the same as it was when THACKERAY wrote of it, long before Sir PHILIP GIBBS had named it "Street of Adventure." The age of broadcasting was not yet; and the New Journalism, while it had immensely quickened its tempo and broadened its scope, had not begun to quench its lively individualism. It is this Fleet Street of yesterday which provides the background for the greater—and incidentally the happier—part of *The Chestertons* (CHAPMAN AND HALL, 12/6), in which the widow of the younger of two brothers, "G. K." and CECIL, writes of them and their circle with an enthusiasm whose unflinching warmth contrasts noticeably with the slightly acidulous note which creeps in when her subject is less congenial. Fleet Street, in common with most of its neighbours, has known grimmer and nobler times since those of which Mrs. CECIL CHESTERTON writes; and if by comparison, the bygone beer seems somehow smaller, the bygone combats less Homeric than of old, the "stunts" less breath-taking in their brilliance, that, after all, cannot be helped, and her family chronicle even gains a certain wistful charm which belongs to most things definitely numbered with the past.

Country Child's Memories

To read *Over to Candleford* (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 8/6) is like looking through a very small window—a cottage window—into a life almost incredibly limited in its scope, fresh and countrified and peaceful; and yet a life with

which most older readers will have at least rubbed shoulders. Miss FLORA THOMPSON, who wrote *Lark Rise*, again describes that hamlet and its inhabitants, but rather—in the manner of an autobiography written in the third person—as it appeared to little *Laura*, the stonemason's eldest child in the eighteen-eighties. Visits to relations in Candleford add to *Laura's* knowledge of life and give Miss THOMPSON the opportunity of drawing such characters as *Uncle Tom*, the shoemaker, bookish and philosophical as a "snob" should be, his wife with her all-pervading kindness, and their bonny children, besides the other less pleasant aunt and her rich churchwarden husband. *Laura's* own father and mother—he so scornful and dissatisfied, she at once so hard and so affectionate—are interesting too, and so are their neighbours; but for readers to-day the book's greatest charm will lie in the country peace and the Victorian security which enfold their sorrows and joys.

Seven for the Land

The battle to-day is "between the parasite trades and professions and the primary producer"; and some sort of return to the land of fertility and population is overdue. Towards this most necessary revolution by "the slaves of the anonymous" (meaning ourselves) the seven papers edited by Mr. H. J. MASSINGHAM in *England and the Farmer* (BATSFORD, 10/6) provide expert guidance. The aesthetic honesty of rural life is vouched for by the book's photographs. Lord LYMINGTON indicts our "cheap economics and shocking husbandry" and proposes to feed forty million Englishmen from English soil in fifteen years. Sir ALBERT HOWARD on "Soil Fertility" shows how the hunger of urban crowds and urban machines has stripped the land and how the process must be stopped. Follow Mr. HENRY WARREN on "Corn," Mr. ADRIAN BELL on "The Family Farm," Mr. ROLF GARDINER on "Rural Reconstruction"—with an interesting glance at the *metayer* system—and Professor Sir GEORGE STAPLETON on "The Reclamation of Grassland." Dr. L. J. PICTON



"Of course we'll redecorate to your own choice if you should decide to commandeer it."



"NOW, IN THE EVENT OF A FIRE BREAKING OUT, WHAT ARE YOU TO DO?"
 "RIGHT. AND, IF I'M NOT TO BE FOUND, WHAT THEN?"

"RUN AND FIND YOU, SIR."
 "PUT OUT THE FIRE, SIR."

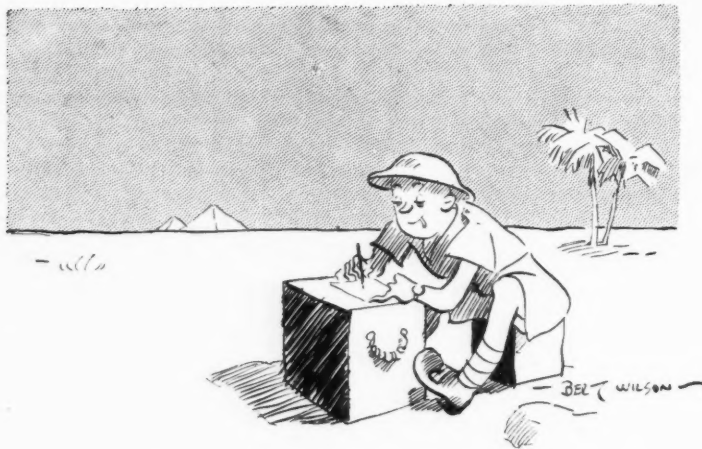
Lewis Baumer, July 28th, 1915

tells us that healthy rats fed on white bread, margarine and other imported oddments begin to eat each other. HENRI QUATRE was not far wrong when he saw social stability in the peasant's Sunday *pot-au-feu* with the peasant's own chicken in it.

The Story of a Ship

When Mr. G. H. JOHNSTON was flying to Sydney, on behalf of the *Argus* newspaper, to "cover" the arrival of *H.M.A.S. Sydney* after her seven months' war service with the British Mediterranean Fleet, he dreamed vaguely of writing a book about this cruiser which had sunk the *Bartolomeo Colleoni*, withstood sixty air-bombing attacks, gone through a score of actions against surface craft, submarines and shore batteries, all "without the loss of a

single man, and without the loss of an hour's fighting efficiency." After three days spent in collecting stories from Captain COLLINS, his officers and men, the idea grew, and with the help of the Australian Naval Board and a Naval Intelligence Officer the author produced *Lioness of the Seas* (GOLLANCZ, 10/6). The title may suggest a boys' thriller, but though there are, naturally, thrills in plenty—particularly in the Battle of Cape Spada—Mr. JOHNSTON writes with naval restraint, realizes the tragedy of Oran, understands the relief of a chief stoker when one of his "husky youngsters" whistled as he swept up paint-flakes that shuddered from pipes at every gun-concussion, and never underestimates the enemy. "Our Navy goes where it wishes to go," wrote Captain COLLINS. Perhaps Mr. JOHNSTON will give us another famous chapter of the *Sydney's* story before long.



"... I can't tell you where I am, but there are Pharaohs at the bottom of my garden!"

Home Guard Goings-On

Mr. Corker Holds the Stage.

THE setting is an English meadow—the time, half-past seven on a grilling summer evening. On the left is a farmhouse with a leaning white fence, and on the right a slow-running river. In the middle distance, cows.

The scene is immediately recognizable; who could mistake the unnatural blue of the sky, or the bright-green of the motionless trees? This can only be the painted scenery for *Jack and the Beanstalk*; there, right at the meadow's far end, is the rustic stile where the Principal Boy will presently soliloquize in rhymed couplets. He will not sit upon the stile, tired and dispirited though he is, because, as all pantomime-goers know, it is nothing but a brown daub at the foot of the backcloth.

And yet . . .

A figure is sitting on the stile, though only long enough to lift over some burden from the other side; and as it begins to come down-stage we see that although our Whittington has flaunted tradition by bursting his way through the scenery, he has respected it to the extent of carrying a stick and a bundle over his shoulder. But as he approaches we see that his appearance is otherwise unorthodox; he wears, not tights and a feathered cap, but khaki trousers rather high in the waist, and a collarless pink shirt rolled up to the elbows; his stick and bundle turn out to be a crowbar and a coil of barbed

wire, and his first remark to reach us is neither soliloquy nor rhyme.

"Now remember my 'structions," says Mr. Corker (for it is he), "and don't go making a — mess of it in front of the 'ole Platoon!"

He is addressing Volunteers Punnett, Tucker and King, who have followed him from the other side of the backcloth and are plodding in his wake, each of them strangely burdened. This is Mr. Corker's Demonstration Barbed-Wire Entanglement Team, about to give its first performance on any stage, and Mr. Corker, the only member of the Platoon who has had any experience of these matters, has been putting it through its paces on three successive evenings. The rest of us have gathered here to-night in these unnaturally natural surroundings to learn what we may from the master and his apprentices.

We have already done a little wiring, also under Mr. Corker's vociferous guidance; but it was only elementary stuff, merely the putting up of a simple four-strand fence across the meadow last Sunday morning. Now we are to see how to erect what is known as an "apron."

Mr. Corker, who is nothing if not thorough, has drawn a plan of this apron in four colours, and this has been circulated amongst us in advance so that we shall have some idea of what to expect. That, at any rate, was the

theory; it is our fault, not Mr. Corker's, if his diagram suggested nothing so much as an over-complicated pattern from a ladies' knitting journal.

"Ah, Mr. Corker!" says our Platoon Commander, who is as eager to learn as any of us.

"Sir," says Mr. Corker.

"Carry on then, wiring-party," says our Platoon Commander.

"Sir," says Mr. Corker again. Mr. Corker is unusually laconic; ordinarily his words fly like bullets, but he is conserving his ammunition to-night.

Presently, their loads deposited, their brows mopped and their shoulders tenderly rubbed, he and his team take up their position at the end of last Sunday's fence. Mr. Corker appears full of confidence; his assistants do not. He takes a step forward, the others a step back.

"Now then!"

It is our turn to recoil a pace. This is a new Corker; there is a glint in his eye, a note of authority in his voice. It is plain that Mr. Corker has done this sort of thing before—plain, not only from his new-found dignity and poise, but from the terms in which he now couches his preliminary address. The phrases of the Army Instructor spring effortlessly to his lips, unique in their bewildering admixture of kindergarten English and obscure technicalities, their utter disregard for syntax and, frequently, their confusing verblessness.

"What we do with an apron fence," he begins with a rush, "taking it on a run down from the pickets to a line of dressed pegs two paces to the rear by rotation of numbers in four interweaving strands. Being cautious in keeping your be'ind orf of the four-strand picket fence." He glares round at us, daring us to see anything funny in this. "That," he continues, "is the single apron as me and these gentlemen will demonstrate. In the case or cases calling for double aprons with additional 'tanglements running away orf in an extended portion proceeding out on the far or enemy side . . ."

After the introduction has proceeded along these lines, in extended portions and inextricably interweaving strands, for some minutes, our Platoon Commander, always sensible to atmosphere, detects a certain restlessness amongst the audience. He suggests to our speaker, in the nicest possible way, that as we only have two hours in which to construct an apron of some seventy yards in extent, it might be as well to get down to the practical side of the business.

At first, Mr. Corker shows signs of resenting this interruption. Has he not



"ANOTHER night gone by without their inflicting this confounded surprise call-out on us."

presented this monologue all over England and France, with never a whisper of adverse comment from, so to speak, the body of the hall? But our Platoon Commander is equal to all situations. It will be getting on for half-past ten, he observes casually, before we get back. The effect is magical. After half-past ten the most patriotically-acquired thirsts must be slaked in beverages entirely unworthy of them. Mr. Corker whirls round dynamically upon his subordinates, allots them a number each, asks them what their numbers are, corrects Volunteers King and Punnett (made a little obtuse by acute stage fright) and bends himself to the task with an anticipatory grunt.

Now, although in these articles the instructional aspect has always been brought out in strong relief for the benefit of those readers whose military career is yet before them, it is not now proposed to go into all the details of Mr. Corker's quick way with aprons. However, to prevent the ignorant from mistaking any wiring parties they may see for orgiastic flounderings of drunken men, thus bringing the British soldier's moral reputation into undeserved disgrace, a few impressions may perhaps be set down.

In its early stages the operation promises to take the form of a Stately Dance. It seems that a set of Lancers is imminent. But when, following Mr. Corker's lead, the participants begin to circle warily round one another in crouching attitudes, carrying their

coils of wire between their knees, the suggestion is of some more primitive recreation, something which should rightly have an accompaniment of exacerbating native drums. It is not long, however, before the rhythm is broken. Mr. Corker snorts indignantly and straightens his back. The whole point of the present manoeuvre is to establish the initial interweaving of each man's strand of wire, and up to now its only result has been for them to wind the stuff round their own ankles.

"Mister Punnett!" says our perspiring specialist—"your number is what?"

"What?" says Mr. Punnett, confused.

"What's your number, Mr. Punnett?" choruses the audience, anxious to assist.

"Four," says Mr. Punnett.

"Then you've messed it up," says Mr. Corker bluntly. "You're where Two ought to be. Who's Two?"

Nobody is Two. Mr. King and Mr. Tucker both declare that they are Three, however, and are willing to back up their claims with argument, but the voice of authority intervenes. Our Platoon Commander recommends Mr. Corker to re-number the party as it stands and to proceed as quickly as possible with the demonstration. In the meantime, having in some miraculous way grasped the system's fundamentals, he himself takes an utterly raw wiring-party down to the other end of the fence and begins work there; if all goes well, the two parties should meet somewhere in the middle.

At Mr. Corker's end, at any rate, all does not go well. Barbed wire is tricky stuff to handle in any but expert hands, and the necessity for adhering to every detail of the system becomes only too plain. The trouble with Mr. Corker's team is that they are unwilling to realize this; they are too prone to use their own initiative. When the rules demand that Numbers Two and Four shall bring their respective strands into a double granny knot, Two feels that a partnership with One in a half-hitch would be more immediately convenient, causing a vibrating hoop of wire to leap from his coil and clutch Three round the shoulders. The false move has far-reaching repercussions. Mr. Corker hurls down his coil and leaps to disengage Three; but the same moment is chosen by One to rise to a standing



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position, lifting his own strand to knee-level just as Mr. Corker is passing. Tackled low, he claws towards the wire of the picket fence, veers away from it on realizing his rashness, and seeks support instead by seizing a handful of Three's tunic. But Three happens at that point to be poised uncertainly on one leg, disentangling wire from his boot-laces, and the pair of them crash painfully into the thicket of barbs. Meanwhile, Mr. Corker's abandoned coil has rolled cunningly away through the fence, casting off neat circles of wire en route. While willing hands assist the fallen demonstrators to their feet, hands slightly less willing go round to bundle the wandering coil back into circulation; by the time this has been done, and the resulting independent entanglement of great complexity has been unravelled and re-wound on the coil, some of the spirit has gone out of Mr. Corker. He seeks the audience's sympathy.

"Hours, I spent with 'em!" he groans—"and still they don't know nothing!" His three backward boys shift their feet uncomfortably. Presently, Mr. Punnett is rash enough to suggest that there might be a better method of tackling the job, and Mr. Corker turns on him fiercely.

"There's one way, an' one way only," he splutters, "of erecting a single apron 'tanglement. An' that's *this* way!" He jerks a contemptuous thumb over his shoulder towards the

other end of the fence. "An' that lot," he says, his accustomed respect for his superiors going by the board in his distress—"that lot thinks they can go straight orf an' build aprons without an experienced man in charge. Why, out in France——"

"Cheese!"

The exclamation is from Mr. Benn, and is uttered with an inflexion of admiration and surprise. We have been watching our own party so closely, lest we should miss any important detail, that our Platoon Commander's subsidiary operation has been quite forgotten; but now that Mr. Corker has drawn our attention to it we all turn half-right and see an incredible spectacle. The other party's apron, glinting in the descending sun, has been evenly woven to within twenty yards of where we stand. The novices (without an experienced man in charge) are solemnly gyrating in concentric circles, not colliding, not falling over their feet, but neatly weaving their obstructive web, which grows towards us even as we watch. We are speechless. Even Mr. Corker is speechless until, falling back a pace, open-mouthed, he strikes his heel upon one of the "dressed pegs" and sits down abruptly on Mr. Tucker's coil of wire. His cry of mental and physical anguish causes our Platoon Commander to look up for the first time. With a keen glance he takes in the situation—the formless mesh of wire,

the almost tearful Corker, his sheepish team of demonstrators, the complete absence of any recognizable apron . . .

A hush has fallen upon us. We feel sorry for Mr. Corker, whom fate has treated so unkindly; we hope that our Platoon Commander will not be too harsh, though we fail to see how even he can sum up the situation in terms which will not hurt our chief demonstrator's already tender feelings. And yet, incredibly, he manages it.

"Well, Mr. Corker," he says, smiling and without a hint of sarcasm, "I really must congratulate you."

"Congrat——?"

"On this excellent plan." He waves Mr. Corker's four-colour knitting pattern. "It's really first-class; makes the whole thing clear; we shouldn't have been able to do a thing without it."

Happily, Mr. Corker, like all honest souls, is soon cured of depression by a few appreciative words.

"Very glad, Sir!" he says smartly, some of the pain already dying out of his eyes. "I would have liked to have had it to work from at this end, but I thought——"

"You thought the amateurs would be more in need of it, eh? Quite right too."

We all knew that this was not quite what Mr. Corker had been going to say, but for once he allowed a misapprehension to go uncorrected. In any case, it was nearly a quarter past ten.



"I'm beginning to think we must have run up behind a taxi-rank."

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